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Ahmedabad's sufi shrine Pirana shows unique confluence of faith

DNA / Paras K Jha / Friday, March 4, 2011 16:08 IST

In 2002, when Hindu-Muslim relations had touched its nadir in Ahmedabad because of the communal riots, a small village in Pirana, just 18 km away from Ahmedabad, showed the way ahead.

The village showed how events need not affect the amity and friendship of the past several years.

The thread that has kept the villagers together for more than 550 years is the dargah of Hazrat Imamsha Bava - a Sufi saint revered by both Muslims and Hindus.

Hazrat Imamsha Bava (also known as Peer Imamuddin) was the founder of a unique sect known as 'Sat Panth' (The True Path) which merged the best practices of Hinduism and Islam. If local legend is to be believed the dargah is as old as Ahmedabad city.

But some historical documents point out that Imamsha Bava was born near Uchh in Bhawalpur state of erstwhile Punjab (located in present-day Pakistan) in 1452 A.D.

According to 'A History of Gujarat' written by Mnekshh Sorbshh Commissariat in 1938, "Imamshah Bava settled in the village of Girmatha, about nine miles from Ahmedabad some time during the early period of the reign of Sultan Mahmud Begada."

The man was believed to have mystical powers and influenced Leuva and Kadva Patels, the Shekhdas and other Hindu agricultural population.

Imamsha Bava is said to have brought rain to the starving farmers of Pirana area, which was facing drought for two years.

Another legend states that once a number of pilgrims were passing by Girmatha on their way to Kashi (Banares) and Imamshah Bava offered to take them there.

The pilgrims agreed and stayed at his home at night, but in the morning they miraculously found themselves in Kashi. They bathed in the Ganga, offered prayers and slept in Kashi at night.

However, the following day they found themselves back at Imamshah Bava's home in Pirana.

At most of the Islamic shrines, the flag on the dargah is green in colour. However, at Imamshah Bava's dargah, the flag is white. Moreover, Satpanthis, as the believers of the sect are called, follow various practices which indicate the confluence of both Hindu and Islamic rituals. realpatidar.com

For instance, all the Satpanthis donate one tenth of their income, which is known as Dashansh to the dargah like the Islamic tradition of paying zakat or religious tax.

The religious scriptures of the sect also indicate words and terminology from Islamic and Hindu religious literature.

Another interesting thing is that while the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb had given a huge piece



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of land to build the tomb of Imamsha Bava, a Hindu had donated money for the construction of the mosque, claim local residents.

ઇમામ શાહની કબર
અને મસ્જિદ

Even today, a large number of his followers are Kutchi Kadva Patels. Moreover, out of 10 trustees of The Pir Imamsha Bava Roza Sanstha Committee trust, which is the administrative body of Imamsha Bava's dargah complex, 7 are Kutchi Patels and 3 are Saiyeds, who are believed to be direct descendants of the saint.

The chairman of the trust is also from Kutchi Kadva Patel community known as 'Kaka'.

However, since 1992 the place has seen some politics. Disputes have arose among the trustees and several cases have been filed in the court over the issue of changing the identity of Pirana Dargah and Imamsha Bava.

But residents of Pirana continue to remain united and bound by their faith in Imamsha Bava.

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